

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELABL, PINS, PINT, MZ
SUBJECT: FRELIMO CRACKS DOWN ON STEVEDORES

REF: MAPUTO A-87

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. NOTICIAS OF DECEMBER 21 PUBLISHED FRONT-PAGE STORY REPORTING THAT GPRM POLICE DURING THAT DAY WOULD BE MAKING "SOME ARRESTS" OF "AGITATORS" AMONG DAY-LABOR STEVEDORES IN THE PORT OF MAPUTO. ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT A GROUP OF "REACTIONARY ELEMENTS" HAD "INFILTRATED" THE STEVEDORES, CAUSING DISTURBANCES, INDISCIPLINE, AND CONSTANT AGITATION. AS A RESULT OF AN ANALYSIS MADE BY AUTHORITIES, THESE AGITATORS HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF POOR WORK CONDITIONS INHERITED FROM COLONIALISM TO CAUSE TROUBLE AMONG THE STEVEDORES.

2. DECEMBER 22 ISSUE OF NOTICIAS CARRIED FOLLOW-UP ARTICLE REPORTING THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 3,000 DAY-LABOR STEVEDORES WORKING FOR PRIVATE COMPANIES IN MAPUTO, WHICH, ACCORDING TO NOTICIAS, IS MORE THAN TWICE THE AMOUNT.
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NEEDED. ARTICLE ADMITEED THAT NO STRONG POLICIAL ORGANIZATION EXISTS AMONG STEVEDORES, BUT BLAMES THIS ALSO ON COLONIALISM, AND INFILTRATION OF THE STEVEDORES BY AGENTS OF PIDE-DGS (PORTUGUESE SECRET POLICE) DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD. ARTICLE ALLEGES STEVEDORES' SITUATION WAS ONE OF PERMANENT INSTABILITY, DUE TO THE NATURE OF THE WORK AND THE

FACT THAT THE STEVEDORES HAD TO STRUGGLE FOR DAILY RECRUITMENT. POOR WORK CONDITIONS AND LACK OF EVEN THE MOST RUDIMENTARY SAFETY EQUIPMENT COMBINED WITH LACK OF JOB SECURITY MADE THE STEVEDORES A RIPE GROUP FOR PENETRATION BY INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AGENTS OF SUBVERSION. ARTICLE ADMITS THAT THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE HAD BEEN WORRIED BY THE SITUATION, AND THEREFORE HAD MOVED THE RECRUITMENT CENTER TO A SUBURB OF MAPUTO, PRIMARILY TO REGULATE THE DAILY RECRUITMENT OF STEVEDORES. HOWEVER, REACTIONARY FORCES (DEFINED AS THOSE WHO BECAUSE OF SENIORITY DID NOT WANT TO LOSE THEIR PRIVILEGED POSITIONS IN DAILY RECRUITMENT) TRIED TO SABOTAGE THE GOVERNMENT-CREATED STEVEDORES UNION. THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION OF THE UNION ALSO TRIED TO CRACK DOWN ON ROBBERIES OF MERCANDISE IN THE PORT, WHICH WAS MET BY STRONG RESISTANCE FROM STEVEDORES WHO TRIED TO "PROMOTE COMPLETE ANARCHY" IN THE PORT.

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3. COMMENT: EMBASSY WAS TOLD BY SOURCE IN CFM (RAIL AND PORT AUTHORITY) THAT OVER A HUNDRED ARRESTS OF STEVEDORES WERE MADE DECEMBER 20 AND 21 AND THAT ARRESTS ARE CONTINUING. ARRESTS INCLUDE SOME MEMBERS OF THE STEVEDORES' "DYNAMIZING GROUP," BUT, IN GENERAL, FRELIMO MEMBERS OR MILITANT STEVEDORES ARE NOT BEING ARRESTED. CRACK-DOWN OF STEVEDORES HAS BEEN BREWING FOR A LONG TIME. STEVEDORES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN AN UNRULY BUNCH, AND HAVE LONG RESISTED FRELIMO'S ATTEMPTS TO ORGANIZE THEM POLITICALLY. EMBASSY AND SHIPPING AGENTS FEEL RECENT REFUSAL OF STEVEDORES TO ACCEPT A GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED TAX (REFAIR) PROBABLY WAS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FINAL STRAW FOR GPRM. IMMEDIATE REACTION OF STEVEDORES TO ARRESTS WAS TO LOW PRODUCTIVITY DECEMBER 20 AND 21, BUT SHIPPING AGENTS SAY CARGO HANDLING RATE IS BACK TO NORMAL DECEMBER 22. HOWEVER, THREAT OF FURTHER RESISTANCE BY STEVEDORES CANNOT BE RULED OUT, AS THE STEVEDORES ARE THE LARGEST GROUP OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN THE COUNTRY. THEY KNOW THEIR STRENGTH, AND THEY ARE KNOW TO BE VERY DISSATISFIED BECAUSE AMOUNT OF WORK IN MAPUTO PORT IS ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF WHAT IT WAS. MANY OF THE "CASUALS (THOSE TIRED DAY-BY-DAY)" NOW WORK ONLY TWO OR THREE DAYS A WEEK, AND SOME EVEN LESS.

4. AS THIS BEING DRAFTED, EMBASSY RECEIVED REPORT THAT ARRESTS OF STEVEDORES NOW TOTAL OVER 240 AND ARE CONTINUING. SOURCE STATED CONSENSUS AMONG STEVEDORES IS THAT IF ARRESTEES ARE NOT RELEASE WITHIN ONE WEEK. THE STEVEDORES WILL CALL A STRIKE. SOURCE SAID STEVEDORES ARE WORKING AS DESCRIBED ABOVE, BUT ATMOSPHERE IN PORT IS TENSE.

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